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M.J. Hillenbrand:al 2/2/59

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J. Hillenbrand (Office and Officers)

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GERMAN
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: February 2, 1959

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SUBJECT: Message from Adenauer on Berlin and Related Problems.

PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary
Mr. Franz Krapf, Minister, German Embassy
Mr. Martin J. Hillenbrand, GER

APPROVED J. Greene
2/10/59

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At his request, the German Chargé d'Affaires, Franz Krapf, called on the Secretary today to deliver a letter from Chancellor Adenauer which had been carried to Washington by a special messenger from the Foreign Office. Handling over the letter, Krapf said he had seen only a summary of the letter, but assumed no immediate reply was anticipated. The Secretary noted that his answer would perhaps be made on his trip.

After reading the letter from the Chancellor, the Secretary commented that it contained a very interesting series of thoughts which we would want to study and discuss. However, we had no immediate reactions to pass on.

In response to Krapf's query as to whether the Secretary had any special points he would like the Embassy to report to Bonn ahead of his visit, the Secretary said there were two questions on which he would concentrate: (a) the Berlin situation and what our reaction should be in the event that the Soviets substituted GER personnel at the checkpoints; and (b) whether it would be desirable to call for a meeting with the Soviets on the German problem, and, if so, when the meeting should be held.

As to the first point, the Secretary commented that the problem had been studied to some extent by the three powers but that no agreement had yet been reached. In fact, an internal decision of the United States Government had only been reached on Thursday at a meeting between the President, the Secretary, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Krapf asked whether it would be helpful if Bonn studied the problem in detail.

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The Secretary observed that this was not enough; it was only a generality. Supposing bridges were blown up to the front and rear of a convoy? Should we send in engineers? That might not suffice to keep the road open, and we might be bogged down without the use of force against us.

The necessity to think this problem through in detail was urgent. The more the German Government could study the question before the Secretary arrived in Bonn the better.

On the timing of a meeting with the Soviets, the Secretary referred to a ticker message from Bonn indicating that a German Government spokesman had favored a meeting during the second half of May, with the reply to the Soviet note of January 10 to be completed during a quadripartite meeting of Foreign Ministers to be held at the time of the NATO spring meeting, April 2-4. The Secretary said that our feeling about the timing of a meeting with the Soviets is that if there is to be such a meeting it should begin before May 27, to give the Soviets an excuse if they want to postpone their Berlin deadline. Such a meeting could not be arranged quickly because the question of composition would probably arise. If a meeting with the Soviets were to have more or less an open agenda, they would probably demand parity. This would mean that other countries, such as Italy, for example, would insist on participation. Therefore, to delay our proposal until April would not allow enough time for the organization of the meeting.

Minister Krapf said that the press report in question was surprising to him, since, he could confidentially inform the Secretary, the German members of the Working Group convening in Washington this week had authority to agree to a meeting in late April.

After the Secretary had asked Krapf to let the Chancellor know that he looked forward to seeing him again, Krapf pointed out that the Embassy has attempted to emphasize that there had been no basic change in United States policy despite newspaper talk. What we were looking for was a tactical means to out-manuever the Soviets. The Secretary said this was true. Krapf commented that it would be a good thing if the Secretary could emphasize this point of view to the Chancellor. Unfortunately, a number of German correspondents in Washington, represented different lines of thinking than the Government of the Federal Republic and slanted their reporting somewhat. The Secretary noted that American correspondents, likewise, took statements out of context and twisted them to signify agreement with their own personal views.

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